

THE

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SOCIALIST STANDARD

Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain

Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement



STOP ALL WAR

Real freedom doesn't have a flag

Also: Party News
Voices of the Russian and
Ukrainian Left

Ukraine: Good Against Evil?
Workers have no country
Kharkov under bombardment



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Introducing the Socialist Party

The Socialist Party advocates a society where production is freed from the artificial constraints of profit and organised for the benefit of all on the basis of material abundance. It does not have policies to ameliorate aspects of the existing social system. It is opposed to all war.

The *Socialist Standard* is the combative monthly journal of the Socialist Party, published without interruption since 1904. In the 1930s the *Socialist Standard* explained why capitalism would not collapse of its own accord, in response to widespread claims to the contrary, and continues to hold this view in face of the notion's recent popularity. Beveridge's welfare measures of the 1940s were viewed as a reorganisation of poverty and a necessary 'expense' of production, and Keynesian policies designed to overcome slumps an illusion. Today, the journal exposes as false the view that banks create money out of thin



air, and explains why actions to prevent the depredation of the natural world can have limited effect and run counter to the nature of capitalism itself.

Gradualist reformers like the Labour Party believed that capitalism could be transformed through a series of social measures, but have merely become routine managers of the system. The Bolsheviks

had to be content with developing Russian capitalism under a one-party dictatorship. Both failures have given socialism a quite different-- and unattractive-- meaning: state ownership and control. As the *Socialist Standard* pointed out before both courses were followed, the results would more properly be called state capitalism.

The Socialist Party and the World Socialist Movement affirm that capitalism is incapable of meaningful change in the interests of the majority; that the basis of exploitation is the wages/money system. The *Socialist Standard* is proud to have kept alive the original idea of what socialism is-- a classless, stateless, wageless, moneyless society or, defined positively, a democracy in which free and equal men and women co-operate to produce the things they need to live and enjoy life, to which they have free access in accordance with the principle 'from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs'

Whatever Happened to the Peace Dividend?

AFTER THE collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, many believed that Russia having abandoned 'communism' (really state capitalism) and embraced free market private capitalism, a new age of freedom and prosperity was beckoning. Any threat of a global nuclear war was buried under the rubble of the Berlin Wall. If any such illusions still lingered, they were cruelly shattered when Russia launched an invasion of Ukraine on 24 February. With President Putin's threat to use nuclear weapons and President Biden's warning of the possibility of a third world war, the spectre of a global military conflict between major capitalist powers is back on the agenda.

Putin's pretext for what he calls the 'special military operation' is to 'de-nazify' the country and to rescue the Russian speaking population in the so-called 'independent republics' of Donetsk and Luhansk in the Donbas region from 'genocide' by the Ukrainian forces. The Western capitalist media offers us a tale of the Ukrainian David gallantly battling the Russian Goliath. The Ukrainian state is presented as a plucky defender of democracy, despite the fact that it is little

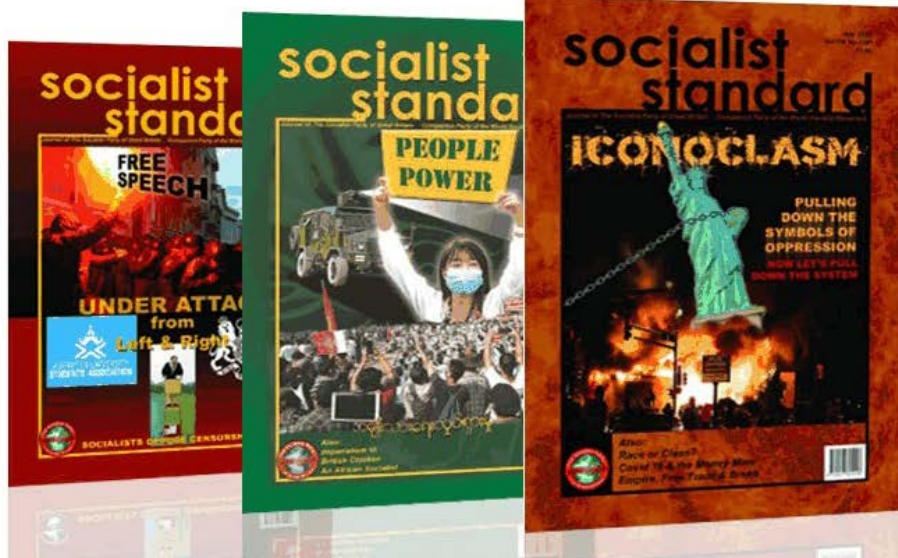
more democratic than Russia. All this obscures the rather sordid reality that this war, like any other war, is a conflict between rival capitalist powers over the wealth looted from the working class.

The Russian capitalist class, which includes the oligarchs and senior members of the military and the state, has been striving to become a major player in the world capitalist markets. Part of their strategy is to regain their sphere of influence in the former state capitalist countries that border Russia. However, the Western capitalist powers, the US, UK and EU, will never be too enamoured with a resurgent Russian capitalist class muscling in on their turf. Since the 1990s NATO has been expanding eastwards close to the Russian border. The EU has also moved eastwards bringing membership to Eastern European countries which effectively removed them from Russia's economic orbit. After the pro-Russian government of Viktor Yanukovich was toppled by the Euromaidan protests in 2014, the new Ukrainian government sought closer relations with the West. The Russian government responded by annexing the Crimea. Alarmed by the Ukraine government's interest in joining

NATO and the EU and sensing weakness and division on the Western side, particularly after the ignominious retreat of the US and other western powers from Afghanistan last August, Putin decided to make his move and attempt to forcibly return Ukraine to the Russian capitalist fold. The Western powers retaliated by supplying arms to the Ukrainian armed forces and imposing economic sanctions against Russian business interests.

As always it is members of the working class who have to pay the bloody price of capitalism's wars, whether they are civilians or members of the armed forces. The Socialist Party has consistently maintained that workers have no interest in supporting capitalism's wars and that their only interest is in abolishing capitalism and establishing socialism. It is encouraging that not all workers in Russia accept the government's pro-war propaganda and many have come out to protest. If strong socialist movements existed in both countries, then the ruling classes would have found it more difficult to mobilise their populations to wage war.

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Tales from the Crypto

ONE OF the less apparent effects of the ongoing Ukraine situation has been a rejuvenated interest by western governments in regulating cryptocurrencies, into which Russian oligarchs, among others, have invested billions. The problem with crypto, from the capitalist state's point of view, is that it is a decentralised, peer-to-peer money system over which the state has no control. Naturally the state will point out that crypto is a gift to organised crime because transactions are not trackable through any central bank system, but they will also pedal hard on the urgent necessity of regulating the market for the sake of protecting you, dear consumer.

The real motivation is that state power over your money means great power over you. For instance, in response to a recent truck driver protest disrupting Ottawa's main road network, the supposedly liberal and progressive Canadian government used emergency powers to freeze protesters' personal and business bank accounts (bit.ly/3CWJFV3). Obviously, if you have all your money in crypto, the state can't grab you by the proverbial short and curlies.

Small wonder then that China has banned crypto entirely. In somewhat less draconian style, the US Justice Department has set up a National Cryptocurrency Enforcement Team with the FBI providing backup services in 'blockchain analysis and virtual asset seizure'. UK regulators are also calling for tighter controls, again flying the consumer protection flag, with the Treasury and Bank of England in urgent consultation on the matter (bit.ly/3CYkAc2). Conversely, after having first banned it last September, Ukraine has just performed a volte-face and legalised Bitcoin, as crypto donations to its war chest have surged north of \$100m (bit.ly/3uhBG0C).

One reason why states haven't cracked down harder and faster may be cultural inertia due to perceived notions of value, as people struggle to come to terms with the idea of currencies that are simply conjured into being, and virtual commodities like non-fungible tokens (NFTs) that have no physical or independent existence. How can you buy a thing that isn't there using money that's been made up?

For socialists though, all commodities are essentially imaginary, in the sense that their 'value' is a socially agreed perception



and not an intrinsic physical property of the object. In socialism, where everything is free, things will be valued only in terms of their usefulness, not in terms of what they're 'worth' in a non-existent market transaction. And currencies – at least government-issued fiat currencies – are all made up anyway. These days, as currency is no longer convertible on demand into gold, that piece of paper in your pocket may say £10 on it, but it's only worth £10 because governments say it is and because we accept it is. Otherwise it's just a firelighter. It's the same with NFTs, which can be thought of as virtual limited shares. You can sell a share in anything, a meme, a song, a photo, if someone is willing to buy it, no matter how 'worthless' it might seem to anyone else. It might sound bonkers but that's capitalist logic for you.

One vital consideration in all this is that it must not be possible, under any circumstances, to sell the same thing twice over, or the whole system is instantly discredited. Until recently, all money was managed through the central state banking apparatus, making double accounting impossible. Now blockchain technology prevents double accounting without central state involvement. Another essential requirement is ensuring that the supply of this virtual currency doesn't increase exponentially, causing runaway inflation. The genius – if that's really the word – of Bitcoin and other cryptos is to make the process of issuing or 'mining' new currency so extravagantly difficult through artificial problem-solving processes that they require enormous and ever-increasing amounts of computer number crunching. The solution of both these requirements has allowed crypto and NFTs to break free and take on a life of

their own.

None of this is without cost however. Currently Bitcoin mining uses more electricity than 185 countries and 7 times Google's global consumption (bit.ly/34XFWtC), with a growing carbon footprint that's surpassing that of New Zealand (bit.ly/3tsNRbQ).

Now chip manufacturers are producing custom 'blockchain accelerator' chips especially for crypto-mining, which demonstrates, if you hadn't already realised it, that what capitalists want and what governments want isn't always the same thing (bit.ly/3L104dF). And crypto has largely contributed to the well-known chip famine of the past couple of years. These days, it's chips with everything as the world surges ahead with 5G and the Internet of Things, VR, augmented reality, smart cities, lights-out factories, drone swarms, robotics, 3D printing, AI, electric vehicles, self-drive tractors, you name it. The problem is, the manufacturers of all these gadgets generally don't make the microchips in-house, as the R&D and the 'fabs' are too expensive. Instead they outsource the work, mostly to one key place in the world, Taiwan, which has a GDP of around \$670bn, close to that of Saudi Arabia, and a per capita workforce productivity 6 times higher than China's.

Taipei is home to the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co (TSMC), the world's largest and most sophisticated semiconductor 'foundry'. In 2020 TSMC accounted for 54 percent of global semiconductor revenues, and is a supplier to Apple, Qualcomm and Nvidia. No other foundry comes anywhere close, not even Samsung in South Korea or GlobalFoundries in the US, and China is not even in the picture.

Which, incidentally, adds a David and Goliath element to the tense situation between China and Taiwan over questions of political 'sovereignty' and strategic questions of control over the South China Sea.

So, while Ukraine spends its crypto windfall on guns before butter, China is currently keeping its cards close to its chest over the Ukraine question, and watching Nato very closely to see how muscular its response to Russia is. Today Ukraine, tomorrow Taiwan, is the big question exercising the geo-strategic wargamers. Just when you think capitalism can't make things any worse, it displays its true inventive genius.

PJS

Election 2022

THE SOCIALIST Party is standing two candidates in May's local elections, one in Clapham East ward of Lambeth Borough Council and one in the Pantiles & St. Marks Ward of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. Here are the election statements.

End Capitalism

The other candidates in this election don't want change. Instead they will be wittering on about how they propose to fix the faulty system we live under – capitalism – so it's maybe a tiny bit better for you and yours. But every politician says this. In every party. In every election. And they never really fix anything.

The reason they can't fix capitalism's problems is because capitalism IS the problem.

Why? Because it only works for the tiny minority who own most of the wealth.

Capitalism has revolutionised our science and technology so that we can now produce enough for everybody worldwide. That means we could make everything free if we take the world back from the rich and run it collectively as a communally owned resource.

What's causing poverty, inequality, wars and global warming is that we have a 21st century planet being trashed by an obsolete 19th century economic system that puts profits before meeting needs.

The natural and industrial resources of our planet Earth are the common heritage of all humans.

Universal free access would be simpler, faster, and smarter. And it's an upgrade the world badly needs, so show your support by voting for the Socialist Party (World Socialist Movement) candidate, Danny Lambert.

Offers to help in the campaign:
02076223811 or text 07922025764.

Fit for Purpose? Or fit for Change?

Democracy can seem abstract when your ability to make changes to your community feels limited to choosing between a small number of political parties every few years. And how can any winning party really represent the needs of all 119,000 residents in Tunbridge Wells borough?

Party politics will always get in the way of local residents being able to make changes that help build a better community for all. The main parties are limited by decisions and views made centrally, and conflict

between them distracts from the need to work for improvements that benefit the greatest number of people. Two councillors this year alone have resigned from their parties for failures in both local administration and at the very top of government. Whether Liberal Democrat or Tory, it is not the party but the political system they wish to maintain which causes these issues. We must strive to create a political system that ensures all members of society are listened to and can contribute. And this must start at the very grass roots of politics, not the top.

In Tunbridge Wells, there has been a disturbing number of cases of women's drinks being spiked in bars and clubs. This problem won't be resolved until every woman is safe and secure while out at night. We should ask what leads some people to violent and antisocial behaviour, and aim for a culture which treats everyone with respect.

Community projects which work to safeguard and support our community never have enough funding, part of a wider problem of neglected public services which has led to problems such as the lack of NHS dental care. Capitalist society is shaped by money, with most wealth ending up with the elite and the majority left to cope with dwindling resources and high prices.

The Green Party would have you believe capitalism can be managed to mitigate the effects of industry on the environment. Locally, efforts to maintain and protect our green spaces, stop developments outside of brownfield sites, reduce traffic, and efficiently renovate properties are constrained by the economic system. The main parties merely attempt treatment of the symptoms; we propose treating the cause by advocating for a socialist society built to satisfy everyone's needs, and those of the planet.

Shannon Kennedy, the Socialist Party candidate, Pantiles & St. Marks Ward.

Offers to help: Phone or text 07971 715569

Statement on the War in Ukraine

THE RUSSIAN Federation has launched a full-scale attack upon Ukraine.

The **World Socialist Movement** is not concerned with the so-called rights and wrongs of this war, whether the niceties of international law were breached or if the sovereignty of Ukraine was disregarded. As workers, we are painfully aware that it will be fellow workers who will pay the blood price of the geo-political games played out by the Great Powers.

Ukraine isn't the 'democracy' that Western politicians and media like to give the impression it is. In fact, the political and economic superstructure of Ukraine is not very much different from that of Russia. So the argument that it is 'democratic' while Russia isn't and that 'we' must support it to defend 'democratic values' is false.

The trouble for our fellow workers living in Eastern Europe is that history has dealt them a bad hand — no choice but to be dominated either by the EU-US or by Russia. For the governments of either side, people in Ukraine are pawns to use to further their interests.

Not a drop of working people's blood should be shed in supporting either side of this capitalist conflict of which bloc can claim territory as part of its sphere of influence. Whether it is the Ukrainian nation or the breakaway republics of Donetsk and Lugansk, it is not worth the sacrifice of our fellow workers' lives.

The WSM condemns the attitude of all those prepared to see towns and cities littered with the corpses of men, women and children. For what? To fight for or against what would be in the main merely a change of rulers, with each side sacrificing our Ukrainian fellow workers and Russian Donbas fellow workers for such spurious claims as acting for 'democracy' and 'freedom'.

Ill-gotten gains

IN HIS State of the Union message on 1 March President Biden told the Russian oligarchs: 'We are coming for your ill-begotten gains', 'your yachts, your luxury apartments, your private jets'. The audience, including billionaire senators, rose to their feet in a standing ovation. Watch them at: tinyurl.com/2bbd5683. This side of the Atlantic, Sky News (28 February) reported that 'Boris Johnson says Russian oligarchs will no longer be able to hide "ill-gotten gains" in UK' and Liz Truss, the very undiplomatic Foreign Secretary, had said:

'There are over 100 billionaires in Russia. We have compiled a hit list of oligarchs. We are working through and putting the cases together, and every few weeks we will sanction new oligarchs. We will be targeting oligarchs' private jets, we will be targeting their properties, we will be targeting other possessions that they have and there will be nowhere to hide.'

In the House of Commons, a Tory MP, Bob Seeley, referred to the Russian capitalists as 'kleptocrats' (*Times*, 2 March).

The present Russian capitalist class amassed their wealth in the first instance when after the collapse of the

USSR the new Russian government, as advised by free-market ideologues from the US, decided to sell off the state-owned industries. A small group, mainly members of the ruling nomenklatura but also dodgy businessmen who had flourished on the margins of soviet state capitalism – such as Roman Abramovich – were able to acquire these assets on the cheap, often via bribery and gangsterism (incidentally, the same happened in Ukraine). But this was just the 'primitive accumulation' of their capital, akin to what happened in England when capital was originally accumulated through overseas plunder and the slave trade.

Once accumulated in this sort of way, capital becomes respectable and is invested and used up but is then renewed and expanded through the productive activity of wage-workers, with by far the greater part of what they produce being appropriated by the capitalists as surplus value, the source of profits, and of the dividends and bloated 'salaries' that afford them a luxurious lifestyle. This taking of the unpaid labour of the producers is the source of the wealth of the Russian capitalists. That's how they 'got' their 'gains'. But this is no different from how billionaires everywhere get theirs, including in Britain and America.

Their wealth, too, is 'ill-gotten', being legally stolen from the producers.

Anyway, what is an 'oligarch'? What is a 'kleptocrat'? In what way, if any, do they differ from a Western capitalist or billionaire?

According to the dictionaries, oligarchy is rule by a few (from the Greek word for few 'oligos') and 'kleptocracy' is power in the hands of thieves (from the Greek word for thief). Socialists used to call capitalists 'plutocrats' (as in Clause 6 of our Declaration of Principles), with power in the hands of the rich (from the Greek 'ploutos'). All three terms are equally apt, alternative descriptions of the '1 percent'. They are rich. They are few. And they are thieves.

The Western billionaires cheering on the expropriation of the wealth of their Russian cousins should be wary. It might set a precedent and the day come when a delegate of the socialist majority will mount the rostrum to tell them: 'We are coming for your ill-gotten gains, not just your yachts, your luxury apartments and your private jets, but your land, your factories, your means of transport and communications, all the means for producing wealth that you have appropriated. And you will have nowhere to hide.'

The richest 10% of people own more than 80% of global wealth, and the 10 richest men have six times more wealth than that of the poorest 3.1 billion people combined. These vast inequalities in wealth reflect how society is split into two classes: the capitalist class who get their wealth through owning industries and corporations, and the working class who rely on wages or benefits to buy what is needed.

The Socialist Party's weekend of talks and discussion looks at why capitalism is divided into classes and how the antagonism between them impacts on the way we live. What is 'class consciousness' and how does it develop? To what extent is it meaningful to say that there is a middle class? What classes were there before capitalism, in previous stages of history? And what could a future classless society be like?

THE CLASS DIVIDE

The Socialist Party's Summer School

19th - 21st August 2022

Fircroft College, Birmingham

Full residential cost (including accommodation and meals Friday evening to Sunday afternoon) is £100; the concessionary rate is £50. Book online at www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/summer-school-2022/ or send a cheque (payable to the Socialist Party of Great Britain) with your contact details to Summer School, The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN. Day visitors are welcome, but please book by e-mail in advance. E-mail enquiries to spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk.

Neither god nor state



The 1st of this month is Iranian Islamic Republic Day. According to Ramin Mazaheri (greenvillepost.com, 6 February), '...after 43 years Iran's revolution has become entrenched in global political history as the most successful political revolution of our contemporary era' (bit.ly/356Z1Ka). Apparently the vast majority of the 99 percent (98.2 percent) of the electorate) voted for the establishment of an Islamic republic. Those who realise they were taken for April Fools include imprisoned trade unionists. Tragically, over 43 years many thousands of our class have been executed, including minors, under a theocratic dictatorship where those convicted of adultery, alcohol consumption, blasphemy, burglary, homosexuality, pornography and prostitution, along with, of course, political dissidence, as well as many other 'crimes', can pay the ultimate price. We must not forget the state-sanctioned use of juveniles as troops during the mass slaughter that was the Iran-Iraq war, or the oppression of women. Add chronic corruption, obvious class division and we can say that only assorted fundamentalists see the revolution as successful. And the suffering grows:

'Iran has returned 820,000 doses of coronavirus vaccines donated by Poland because they were manufactured in the United States... TV quoted Mohammad Hashemi, an official in the country's Health Ministry, as saying that Poland donated about a million doses of the British-Swedish AstraZeneca vaccine to Iran. 'But when the vaccines arrived in Iran, we found out that 820,000 doses of them which were imported from Poland were from the United States,' he said. Hashemi said "after coordination with the Polish ambassador to Iran, it was decided that the vaccines would be returned." Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has final say on all state matters, in 2020 rejected any possibility of American or British vaccines entering

the country, calling them "forbidden" (whdh.com, 21 February, bit.ly/3BVqIH3).

Toll: more than 270,000 coronavirus-related deaths since the pandemic began.

Strange bedfellows

Fundamentalists are not limited to book-burning fakirs issuing fatuous yet often fatal fatwas. '...Republicans aren't going to stop with abortion bans...' (Cue 'Handmaid's Tale': Michigan Republicans say 1965 Supreme Court decision legalizing birth control was wrong, altnet.org, 21 February, bit.ly/3vjdQ6N). According to Planned Parenthood.



'In 2006, Nicaragua enacted a complete abortion ban, including in cases of rape, incest, and when the life of the woman is at risk. Access to sexual and reproductive health information and services is seriously lacking, and the country now has the highest rate of teen pregnancy in Latin America.'

Recall, Ortega was returned to power in 2007 as the Catholic president of Nicaragua. He named his wife as Vice President and stated: 'This revolution – in which women have participated shoulder to shoulder – has opened the doors to the full participation of women in all spheres: political, social and economic (theweek.co.uk, 4 August, 2016, bit.ly/3vIGRyT) – nonsense only matched by that of another President, Ronald Reagan, calling Nicaragua a beachhead of communism. Nicaragua is one of 24 countries in the world where abortion is totally illegal under any circumstances, including when the woman's life or health is at risk. Maternal mortality is 98 per 100,000, 118th in the world. And leftist/nationalist fundamentalists claim that the empowerment of women in Nicaragua has been achieved.

Cannot see the wood for the trees

'Conflict, climate change, and COVID-19 are having a clear impact on the global poor, in many cases having joint incidence

upon those living in poverty, the World Bank's report concludes' ('Inequality Kills One Person Every Four Seconds,' ipsnews.net, 14 February, bit.ly/3JOWGH8). The article's conclusion echoes that of Dr. King, who focused famously on the 'Triple Evils' of poverty, racism and militarism, ie, symptoms rather than the underlying disease and one reason why Taylor Branch, the Pulitzer winning historian, could say of MLK that 'all the issues that he raised toward the end of his life are as contemporary now as they were then' (nytimes.com, 4 April 2018 nyti.ms/3t4gFpy). Fundamentally idealistic, reformists eschew revolution in favour of another spin on the misery-go-round. Consider, capitalism causes the rivalries that lead to war in the modern world. Conflicts between states and within states can result from competition over markets, sources of raw materials, energy supplies, trade routes, exploitable populations and areas of strategic importance. 'Russia's president knows exactly what he wants, and it's not eastern Ukraine. His interests are all about oil and gas and supply routes. The rest is smoke and mirrors' (thedailybeast.com, 1 March 2015, bit.ly/3M0FAmK).

With regard to climate change, all enterprises and states seek to minimise costs and releasing greenhouse gases into the environment is a way of reducing monetary costs. Human and environmental needs always come second, if at all, in the profit system. Capitalism's primary imperative is always to produce more and accumulate capital or otherwise lurch into economic crisis. '...companies are continuing to invest vast sums in exploration and new fields, which the IEA said last year could not be brought to fruition if the world was to limit global heating to 1.5C' (theguardian.com, 11 February, bit.ly/3sjsHfM). Nearly six million deaths, twelve times that of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, due to Covid-19 have been confirmed worldwide. Given that the knowledge and resources exist to reduce the number of epidemics and minimise the possibility of them becoming pandemics, the vast majority of these deaths can be considered premature. Capitalism has eradicated rinderpest and smallpox, yet the driving force of capitalism is the pursuit of profit not health. According to March's Scientific American, 'Global billionaire wealth grew by \$4.4 trillion between 2020 and 2021, and at the same time more than 100 million people fell below the poverty line' (bit.ly/3BTn7nk). And 'The poor, no matter where they live, will suffer the greatest lasting toll' – until, that is, we organise as a class for the conquest of the earth and all its resources.

UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

All meetings online during the pandemic.
See page 23.

LONDON

North London branch. Meets 3rd Thurs. 8pm at Torriano Meeting House, 99 Torriano Ave, NW5 2RX. Contact: Chris Dufton 020 7609 0983 nlb.spgb@gmail.com

South & West London branch. Meets last Saturday in month, 2.00pm. Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Contact: 020 7622 3811. spgb@worldsocialism.org

MIDLANDS

West Midlands regional branch. Meets last Sat. 3pm (check before attending). Contact: Stephen Shapton. 01543 821180. Email: stephenshapton@yahoo.co.uk.

NORTH

North East Regional branch.

Contact: P. Kilgallon, c/o Head Office, 52 Clapham High Street, SW4 7UN.

Lancaster branch. Meets 3rd Mon, 3pm, Friends Meeting House, Meeting House Lane. Ring to confirm: P. Shannon, 07510 412 261, spgb.lancaster@worldsocialism.org.

Manchester branch. Contact: Paul Bennett, 6 Burleigh Mews, Hardy Lane, M21 7LB. 0161 860 7189.

Bolton. Contact: H. McLaughlin. 01204 844589.

Cumbria. Contact: Brendan Cummings, 19 Queen St, Millom, Cumbria LA18 4BG.

Doncaster. Contact: Fredi Edwards, fredi.edwards@hotmail.co.uk

SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST

Kent and Sussex regional branch. Meets 2nd Sun. 2pm at The Muggleton Inn, High Street, Maidstone ME14 1HJ. Contact: spgb.ksrb@worldsocialism.org.

South West regional branch. Meets 3rd Sat. 2pm at the Railway Tavern, 131 South Western Road, Salisbury SP2 7RR.

Contact: Stephen Harper spgbsw@gmail.com
Brighton. Contact: Anton Pruden, anton@pruden.me

Canterbury. Contact: Rob Cox, 4 Stanhope Road, Deal, Kent, CT14 6AB.

Luton. Contact: Nick White, 59 Heywood Drive, LU2 7LP.

Cornwall. Contact: Harry Sowden, 16 Polgine Lane, Troon, Camborne, TR14 9DY. 01209 611820.

East Anglia. Contact: David Porter, Eastholme, Bush Drive, Eccles-on-Sea, NR12 0SF. 01692 582533. Richard Headicar, 42 Woodcote, Firs Rd, Hethersett, NR9 3JD. 01603 814343.

Essex. Contact: Pat Deutz, 11 The Links, Billericay, CM12 0EX. patdeutz@gmail.com.

Cambridge. Contact: Andrew Westley, wezelecta007@gmail.com. 07890343044.

IRELAND

Cork. Contact: Kevin Cronin, 5 Curragh Woods, Frankfield, Cork. 021 4896427. mariekev@eircom.net

NORTHERN IRELAND

Belfast Contact: Nigel McCullough. 02890 930002

SCOTLAND

Edinburgh branch. Meets 1st Thurs. 7-9pm. The Quaker Hall, Victoria Terrace (above Victoria Street), Edinburgh. Contact: J. Moir. 0131 440 0995. jimmyjmoir73@gmail.com

Branch website: <http://geocities.com/edinburghbranch/>

Glasgow branch. Meets 1st and 3rd Tues. at 7pm in Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow. Contact: Peter Hendrie, 75 Lairhills Road, East Kilbride, Glasgow G75 0LH. 01355 903105.

peter.anna.hendrie@blueyonder.co.uk.

Dundee. Contact: Ian Ratcliffe, 12 Finlow Terrace, Dundee, DD4 9NA. 01382 698297.

Ayrshire. Contact: Paul Edwards 01563 541138. rainbow3@btopenworld.com.

Lothian Socialist Discussion @Autonomous Centre Edinburgh, ACE, 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh EH7 5HA. Meets 4th Weds. 7-9pm. Contact: F. Anderson 07724 082753.

WALES

South Wales Branch (Swansea)

Meets 2nd Mon, 7.30pm (except January, April, July and October), Unitarian Church, High Street, SA1 1NZ. Contact: Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well Street, Waun Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB. 01792 643624.

South Wales Branch (Cardiff)

Meets 2nd Saturday 12 noon (January, April, July and October) Cafe Nero, Capitol Shopping Centre, Queens Street, Cardiff.

Contact: Richard Botterill, 21 Pen-Y-Bryn Rd, Gabalfa, Cardiff, CF14 3LG. 02920-615826. botterillr@gmail.com

Central Branch

Meets 1st Sun, 11am (UK time) on Discord.

INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS

LATIN AMERICA

Contact: J.M. Morel, Calle 7 edif 45 apto 102, Multis nuevo La loteria, La Vega, Rep. Dominicana.

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Cop26 cop-out

WHEN COP26 took place last November, we warned our audience about the optimistic sound bites of the politicians and to be wary of the promises they make. Of course, we were not alone in our scepticism for any success in solving the climate crises. Many environmentalists shared our doubts that COP26 would produce either sufficient or effective policies. However, we identified the problem as not being one of political will but arising from economic necessity because of the inherent rules of capitalism – priority will always be for the accumulation of profit and people's and the planet's well-being shall be merely a secondary consideration.

Larry Fink, the chief executive of BlackRock, the world's biggest investment fund management firm with about £7.4tn in assets, said pushing climate policies was about profits:

'Stakeholder capitalism is not about politics. It is not a social or ideological agenda. It is not 'woke' We focus on sustainability not because we're environmentalists, but because we are capitalists and fiduciaries to our clients.'

The Glasgow conference was full of 'net zero pledges.' There were many, from India's desire to be carbon neutral by 2070, China's by 2060, to the EU's goal of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 percent by the year 2030, to US commitments to cut emissions by 50 percent by the same year. These are all illusory climate action measures. 'Net zero emissions' does not actually mean bringing emissions down to zero. Rather it refers to policies that aim to compensate continued emissions with projects that absorb carbon elsewhere. These policies are supposed to help remove the extra emissions from the atmosphere through measures like tree planting, enhanced forest protection (ie, preventing deforestation), and costly carbon capture and storage technologies.

Less than 6 months after COP26, countries and corporations have backtracked or broken their pledges. The compromises and concessions have led to accusations of 'greenwashing' once the finalised COP26 statement was published. Given the division of the world into competing capitalist states with different economic interests, it's surprising that there was any agreement.



Just three months after the event even the UK MP who chaired the summit, Alok Sharma, accepted that there is a danger that the vital pledges made will 'wither on the vine...We will have mitigated no risks. Seized no opportunities. We will have fractured the trust built between nations. And 1.5 degrees will slip from our grasp.'

Meanwhile China's President Xi Jinping said that low-carbon goals should not come at the expense of 'normal life', and that 'Reducing emissions is not about reducing productivity, and it is not about not emitting at all'. His American counterpart, Joe Biden, has conducted one of the largest oil drilling lease auction in recent times.

The case for fossil fuels to begin to be phased out, such as reliance on coal-burning power stations, was the earliest to be reneged upon with very little change on the use and subsidies to coal as an energy source. Coal production has reached record levels in a number of countries.

Reducing deforestation was another key element in climate-friendly policies yet these too were sacrificed to the altar of capital. Barely was the ink dry on Indonesia's signature, along with more than 100 countries, on a plan to stop cutting down trees on an industrial scale in under a decade, than Siti Nurbaya Bakar, its environment minister, was saying 'forcing Indonesia to zero deforestation in 2030 is clearly inappropriate and unfair' and that any deal could not halt economic growth.

Climate nationalism in the name of 'national interest' has resulted in so many loopholes in all the promises, pledges and policies to reach the 1.5C of the Paris

Agreement, it has turned into a sieve.

For all the language of it being a global problem, and requiring world action, we heard very little about doing away with the nation-state.

Previously, our detractors saw socialism as an answer for the far-off future and the reform of capitalism as realistic. They squabbled among themselves for what is the 'better' strategy but socialism simply did not appear on their radar. The Socialist Party's message is utterly drowned out by continual capitalist media propaganda.

The second instalment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) sixth assessment report compiled by 270 scientists who assessed over 34,000 studies is described by Hoesung Lee, Chair of the IPCC, as 'a dire warning about the consequences of inaction.'

The final sentence of the IPCC report reads: 'The scientific evidence is unequivocal: climate change is a threat to human well-being and the health of the planet. Any further delay in concerted global action will miss a brief and rapidly closing window to secure a liveable future.'

Socialism, which our critics customarily presented as an unrealistic, utopian pipedream, can now begin to be acknowledged as the only alternative to the possible collapse of human civilisation. We need to stop centring attention on the false 'solutions' the wealthy and powerful are offering. Anything less than socialism is distracting smoke and mirrors.

ALJO

Voices of the Russian and Ukrainian Left

THIS IS an internet-based survey of what leftist organisations (or those perceived as such) in Russia and Ukraine are saying about the war in Ukraine.

Russia: the intra-system left

The main division in Russian politics is between the four parties 'inside the system' that on crucial issues are loyal to President Putin and other groups 'outside the system'. Two of the intra-system parties – the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) and Just Russia – are considered leftist. In foreign policy, however, all four intra-system parties adhere to various forms of Russian great-power nationalism.

The CPRF website (cprf.ru) presents 'Information Materials' on the war, dated 14 March and prepared by Vyacheslav Tetekin, a historian, former parliamentarian and member of the party's Central Committee. He argues that 'the events in Ukraine are yet another American war for control of the world'; the military operation is in 'the historical interests of the country and the people' while 'sanctions will have a beneficial effect' by making Russia less dependent on the West.

Nevertheless, a few prominent members of the CPRF have expressed opposition to the war, including three deputies of the State Duma and Yevgeny Stupin, a defence lawyer who sits on the Moscow City Council.

Also on March 14, Sergei Mironov, leader of Just Russia, calls for an international tribunal to try Ukrainian Nazis as well as 'murderers and sadists from the Security Service of Ukraine' for 'crimes against peace and humanity'. The trial must be held in Odessa's House of Trade Unions, for it was there that anti-Maidan activists were burnt alive on May 2, 2014. 'The date will be set later' – presumably after Odessa has been occupied (bit.ly/3D2L9gw).

An anti-war resolution

Part of the extra-system left has been more willing to oppose the war. On 24 February participants at a round table of left activists signed an anti-war resolution. On February 26 the Central Organizing Committee of the 'social-democratic' organisation 'Left

Socialist Action' (LSA) officially approved the document and published it on their website (bit.ly/34Sy7W2).

The resolution condemns the decision to invade Ukraine, which it attributes to 'the unhealthy foreign-policy ambitions of a narrow circle of persons in the country's leadership' and a wish to 'distract attention from the domestic failures of Russia's government', demands 'an immediate end to aggression against the fraternal Ukrainian people' and calls upon 'all citizens of Russia who hold left-wing and democratic views to conduct anti-war agitation'. The final point declares that 'if the existing regime is unable to secure peace' then 'the whole socio-political system' will have to undergo 'radical change'.

Three of the resolution's ten signatories are unaffiliated public figures:

- Boris Kagarlitsky, director of the Institute of Globalisation and Social Movements
- pollster and columnist Grigory Yudin
- Sergei Tsukasov, member of the Council of Deputies for the Ostankino Municipal District (Moscow)

The other seven are:

- historian and lecturer Nikita Arkin (LSA)
- Yevgeny Stupin (CPRF)
- mathematics lecturer Mikhail Lobanov (trade union 'University Solidarity')
- historian Alexei Sakhnin (Left Front)
- Vladimir Avramchuk (Revolutionary Workers' Party)
- Nikita Novichkov (Union of Marxists)
- musician, author and publisher Kirill Medvedev (Russian Socialist Movement)

It is unclear whether any organisation besides LSA has officially adopted the resolution. It does not appear on the website of any other group. Two of the signatories definitely do not represent the organisations to which they belong. Stupin does not represent the CPRF (see above). Nor does Sakhnin represent the Left Front, even though he was one of its founders and first coordinators. Left Front calls itself 'a left-patriotic public organisation' and supports the invasion of Ukraine. Its leader, Sergei Udaltsov, is a self-styled 'Soviet patriot' who managed the campaign of CPRF presidential candidate Gennady Zyuganov in 2012.

Russia: Trotskyists

The Revolutionary Workers' Party, which has a Trotskyist orientation, models its position with regard to the current war on Lenin's 'revolutionary defeatism' during World War One. According to their spokesman Vladimir Pisarev, the war between Russia and Ukraine is 'imperialist on both sides'; however, Russia's defeat is to be welcomed as it will bring the Putin regime to an end (bit.ly/3KYsK7i).

The Russian Socialist Movement is also Trotskyist. At the time of writing no commentary on the current war has appeared on its website (bit.ly/34UMysT).

Anarcho-syndicalists

On February 25, the Russian section of the anarcho-syndicalist International Workers' Association issued the following statement in several languages:

'The war has begun.

What people were afraid of, what they were warned about, what they did not want to believe, but what was inevitable – happened. The ruling elites of Russia and Ukraine, instigated and provoked by world capital, greedy for power and bloated with billions stolen from the working people, came together in a deadly battle. Their thirst for profit and domination is now paid with blood by ordinary people-- just like us.

The first shot was fired by the stronger, more predatory and more arrogant of the bandits – the Kremlin. But, as always in imperialist conflicts, behind the immediate cause lies a whole tangle of disgusting reasons.... Today these (interstate conflicts) give rise to local wars. Tomorrow they threaten to turn into a Third World Imperialist War.

Whatever 'humanist', nationalistic, militaristic, historical or any other rhetoric justifies the current conflict, behind it there are only the interests of those who have political, economic and military power. To us, working people, pensioners, students, it brings only suffering, blood and death. Bombing of peaceful cities, shelling, killing people have no justification.

We demand an immediate cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of all troops to the borders and lines that existed before the start of the war.

We call on the soldiers sent to fight not to shoot at each other, and especially not to open fire on the civilian population.

We urge them to refuse en masse to carry out the criminal orders of their commanders.

STOP THIS WAR!

BAYONET TO THE GROUND!

We call on people in the rear on both sides of the front, the working people of Russia and Ukraine, not to support this war, not to help it- on the contrary, to resist it with all their might!

Don't go to war!

Not a single ruble, not a single hryvnia from our pockets for the war!

Strike against this war if you can!

Someday-- when they have enough strength-- the working people in Russia and Ukraine will demand the full responsibility from all presumptuous politicians and oligarchs who set us against each other.

NO WAR BETWEEN WORKING PEOPLE OF RUSSIA AND UKRAINE!

NO PEACE BETWEEN CLASSES!

PEACE TO THE HOUSES - WAR TO PALACES!

'(bit.ly/3CSUck3)'

Assambleya (Assembly), online journal of the Kharkov anarchists, expresses general agreement with this statement (bit.ly/3MXsXtf)

They also report an anti-war protest in the Russian city of Kostroma by law student Irina Shumilova, author of The Black Book of Capitalism. Her placard read: 'If you're a vegetable at home, you'll be fertilizer abroad.' (bit.ly/3lnBa6k).

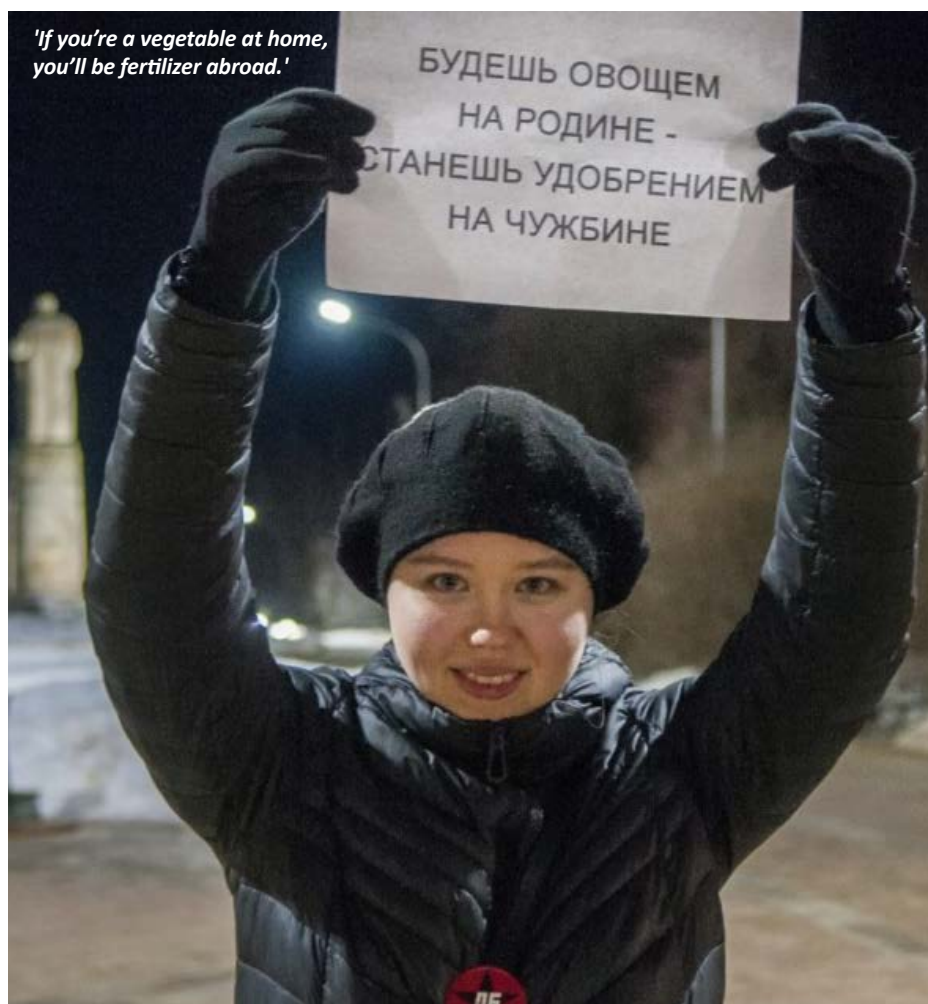
In an interview with Spanish comrades, the Russian anarcho-syndicalists make it clearer that they oppose both sides in the war:

'The current war is solely a confrontation between two states, two groupings of capitalists, two nationalisms. It is not for anarchists to choose which is the 'lesser evil'. We do not desire victory for either side. All our sympathy is for the ordinary peaceful working people who are perishing today under gunfire, missiles and bombs' (bit.ly/3N7h3Nh).

Ukraine: the Left

The 'Old Left' parties in post-Soviet Ukraine – the Communist Party of Ukraine, the 'social-democratic' Socialist Party of Ukraine, the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine, Borotba (Struggle) – were oriented toward the former Soviet Union, Russia or 'Eurasia'. Their offices were destroyed by Ukrainian nationalists during the Maidan of 2014 and they "were banned in 2015 by the 'de-communisation' law."

A Trotskyist group called the Party of Social Revolution managed to survive the upheaval by professing support for the Maidan protests despite their liberal and nationalist character and by giving their



organisation a more 'respectable' name -- 'the Social Movement' (bit.ly/3lp4w48) Apart from the anarchists, this seems to be the only viable leftist organisation in Ukraine today. In the current war they support 'the fight of the Ukrainian people for self-determination' but are opposed to NATO (<https://tinyurl.com/mu3sxs6m>). Some small leftist groups are among the eleven parties suspended by the Zelensky government on 20 March 2022 for alleged ties to Russia..

Anarchists in Ukraine

While the Ukrainian Left is weak, anarchists have a significant presence in the country, partly due to interest in the legacy of Nestor Makhno and his 'insurgent army' during the Russian civil war.

In 2014 the Ukrainian anarchist movement split in two. One group gave whole-hearted support to the Maidan protests and then helped the new authorities fight the separatists in the Donbass. The other – smaller – group tried to formulate a more 'internationalist' position.

Three tendencies are now identifiable within the anarchist movement:

- 'National-anarchists', such as 'Nihilist', 'Revolutionary Action' and the Arsenal football fan club in Kiev and 'Autonomous Resistance' in Lviv, lend

full support to the Ukrainian state and are willing to join its armed forces.

They even man an 'anarchist battalion'.

- The Kharkov anarchist group 'Assembly' exemplifies those who condemn both sides, though they do consider Russia a more dangerous and reactionary state than Ukraine. They do not fight or urge others to fight, but work to help the civilian population, especially victims of bombing and bombardment.
- 'Black Flag' in Kiev and Lviv occupies an intermediate position. They blame the war on capitalism and on the rulers of both states, but participate in 'territorial self-defence' – local volunteer light-infantry units.

It may seem strange for people to claim to be nationalists and anarchists at the same time, inasmuch as nationalism is usually considered the doctrine of the nation-state while anarchists are against the state. However, 'national-anarchists' distinguish between the nation-state, which they oppose, and the national community, which they value. They regard the nation-state and the national community as separable. Thus even if the Ukrainian state is defeated they hope to continue 'autonomous resistance' on behalf of the national community.

STEFAN

Ukraine: Good Against Evil . . . Or More Complicated Than That?

THE WAR in Ukraine has led to much sympathy and solidarity from people across Europe and beyond. And in a way, this is both understandable and heart-warming. Few want to see innocent people bombed out of their homes and turned into refugees, fleeing mass killing. The assistance people have been prepared to give Ukrainian refugees has been a testament to the basic solidarity and mutual support socialists have always said we are capable of as human beings.

The media have largely portrayed this war as a battle of good against evil. Socialists know that wars in modern capitalist society are never quite that simple. Sometimes the motivations for war are transparently economic (eg the Gulf Wars), while at other times there is a complex geo-political element, with states manoeuvring for political advantage and seeking to extend or defend their spheres of influence (the Falklands War was closer to this).

The Ukraine situation is complicated and most people (including us) did not expect armed conflict to actually break out. The 'good versus evil' scenario that is the dominant narrative doesn't quite fit and as usual other factors are at play.

Democracy?

Over time, political democracy, imperfect though it always is within capitalism, has emerged as the dominant and favoured way for the ruling classes of nation states to manage their affairs. This has come about for a number of reasons – some because of political pressure from the working class wanting a say in how society is organised and run (eg the Chartist in Britain in the nineteenth century), but also because the owning class is rarely united. It is typically a mass of competing interests, not just between states but within them as well. Financial capital (such as the banks) often has different interests to industrial capital for example, and political democracy is a good way of the state arbitrating between competing interests.

Many states though take years to

develop this type of democratic practice and culture as they have little by way of a tradition in it. Indeed, since the Second World War, while numerous states have gravitated towards elements of political democracy across much of the world, some have done it much more successfully than others. This is the story of many of the states that either emerged or reinvented themselves after the collapse of the old Soviet Union in the early 1990s, including both Russia and Ukraine. Both have elements of capitalist political democracy but in an obviously deformed way, and the type of political corruption that tends to exist at the fringes of more mature capitalist states like those in Western Europe, North America, etc tends to be more entwined with the state apparatus at a deep and fundamental level. Their past authoritarian cultures have had a lasting impact.

The think-tank Transparency International (not above controversy itself) produces an annual Corruptions Perceptions Index which ranks countries according to general perceptions of corruption and theft in their state machinery and operations. In 2021 Russia ranked a lowly 136th out of 180 listed states. Interestingly, Ukraine was little better at 122nd in the world as graft, corruption and client-politics there are legion. This manages to put both Russia and Ukraine even lower than dictatorships such as Cuba (64th) and China (66th).

Most politics in Ukraine is dominated by ethnic and nationalist considerations, with what could be described as the right/left political spectrum associated with more mature democratic states barely in existence. This situation is blurred slightly by the fact that Ukraine currently has a government led by a president (Zelenskyy) and party (Servant of the People) that have an orientation that is at least broadly aligned with some conventional notions of Western parliamentary democracy, including aspirations towards membership of the European Union.

Russia on the other hand has more

obviously still struggled to shake off decades of authoritarian control and culture and is run by what appears to be an ever-smaller clique led by President Putin, an elected dictatorship in all but name. Checks and balances on authoritarian actions and adventures are low and Putin has long hankered after recreating what some would refer to as the old Soviet Union without much of the associated Leninist politics. It could be seen even more easily as a recreation of Tsarist Russia, an empire which also included most of what is now Ukraine and parts of many other Eastern European states.

Whenever Putin sees an opportunity to embark on a military adventure in pursuit of this goal he has a tendency to move fast, with few if any challenging voices around him in the Russian hierarchy. The usual manoeuvrings and diplomacy around these situations by other states effectively become cast as an excuse to do what he most likely wants to do anyway (as with NATO expansion into the East). This then – at least in theory – strengthens his internal and external position as the leader of an empire trying to regain its 'rightful' position among the nations. This worldview has been exacerbated by longstanding grievances, both related to Russia's historic standing and defeat in the Cold War, and also personal slights such as when his mooted interest in Russia itself joining NATO over two decades ago was rebuffed by both Bill Clinton and George W Bush.

Economic interests

In addition, Russia has its own clear economic interests too. As such, in 1994 it sought to set up its own trading bloc which came to full fruition in 2011 when seven other countries agreed to join it in a free trade area. These were Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine. But the orientation of Ukraine along with many other Eastern European states towards the EU led it to sign a 'Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement'

in January 2016. Since then, Russia has suspended its free trade agreement with Ukraine and Ukraine retaliated by passing trade restrictions on Russia.

Russia has long created issues for the West that it has struggled to resolve. Doing deals with the oligarchs while watching Putin help rip up various geo-political agreements made in the 1990s after the fall of the Soviet Bloc has created a certain cognitive dissonance, but until recently it was the money that largely won out. Since the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the oligarchs who stripped the state of many of its assets for a massive profit have found a welcome home for the most part, particularly in the UK. The debutant balls that take place in Mayfair each summer are no longer arranged for Sloane Rangers but for the sons and daughters of the Russian elite. Many of the top FTSE 350 resources companies quoted on the London Stock Exchange are Russian – such as Evraz, Polymetal International and Petropavlovsk. The oligarchs and their families who own football clubs and newspapers had become ever more integrated into Western capital and it is hardly surprising, as they have qualities, connections and money admired

by the elites in the West.

According to The Economist, 41.3 percent of Russia's exports come to the European Union and the UK, while 34.5 percent of its imports originate from the EU and UK. The massive sanctions that have now been imposed as a result of the war in Ukraine will hit this considerably and it is clearly something the West would not have otherwise countenanced.

Arguably, the move to expand both the EU and NATO to the East have 'provoked the Russian bear', but it is a bear they have been prepared to happily play with for quite some time. This too despite the Russian invasions of Chechnya (1995), Georgia (2008) and Crimea (2014). And many on the political left have been closet apologists for Putin on the grounds that an enemy of an enemy must be a friend, irrespective of the discrimination and human rights abuses of the Putin regime and the fact that most of them would most likely end up in prison there just for promoting the views they have.

Murky business

So, one way or the other the war in

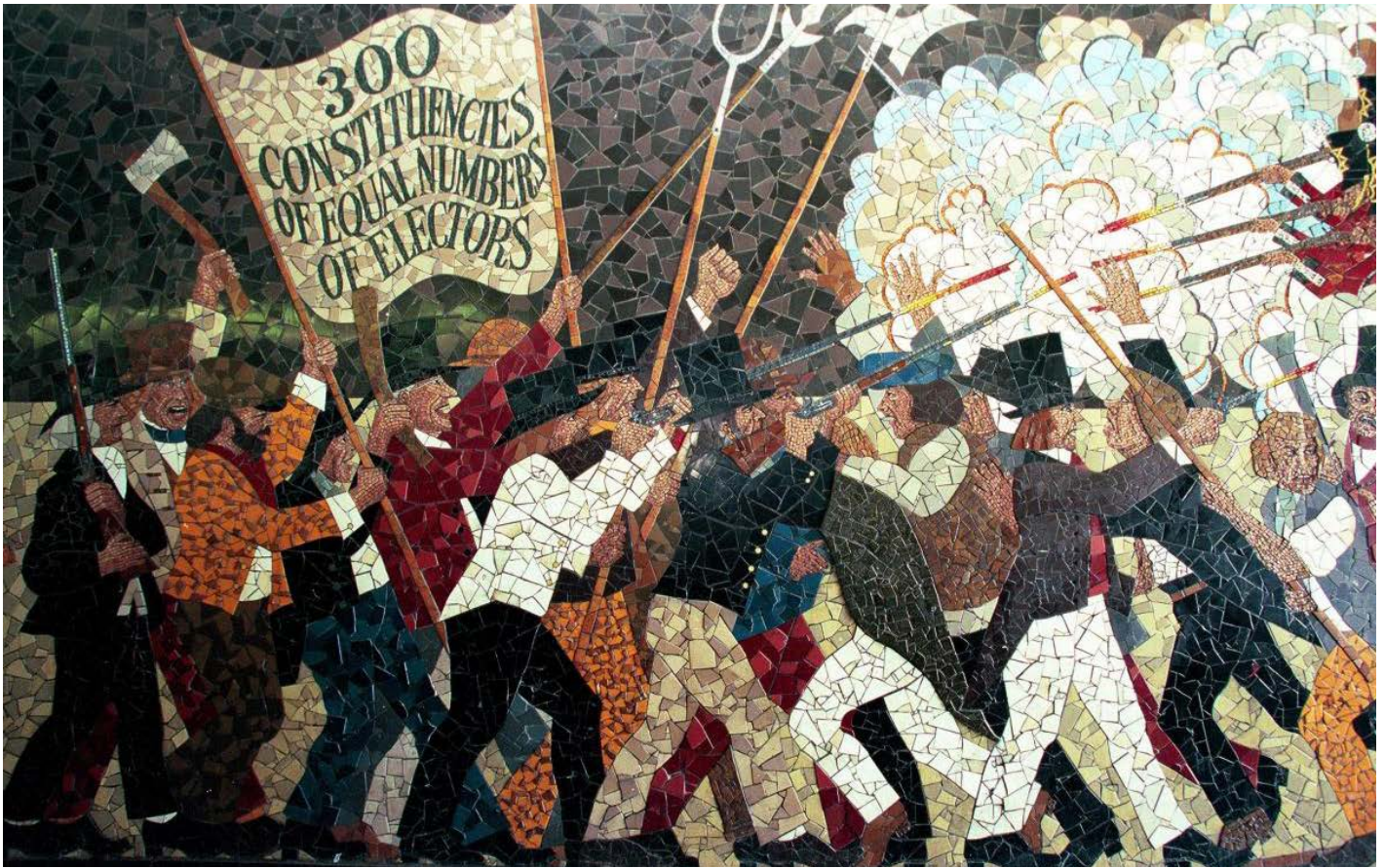
Ukraine has interrupted business as usual, as wars tend to do. The previous Russian invasions of adjacent territory were not welcomed by the West but not proactively resisted either. Ukraine is too big, too close and the situation now perhaps too grotesque in some aspects for them to turn the other cheek completely. They will not wish to get involved militarily (at least not in an active sense) as that might provoke an even worse escalation, so the retaliation will be economic in essence, building on Ukraine's own sanctions against Russia since 2016.

It is a mess, but the sort of mess capitalism delivers all too frequently. Socialists have sympathy with the oppressed and those struggling for basic democratic rights everywhere but don't take sides in conflicts between elites. We know all too well that the victors soon become the oppressors (as happened in Russia itself post-USSR). To put it bluntly, we are on the side of both the Ukrainian people getting bombed out of their homes and the Russian soldiers getting murdered in battle because of the imperial fantasies of the leader who ordered them there.

DAP



Workers have no country



OUT OF the discontent of the Industrial Revolution arose the Chartist movement. The need for the whole working class to unite in one movement had come to the fore.

Many are aware of the International Working Men's Association (the First International), in which Marx was an active participant. Few know of its precursor which most probably served as its prototype.

In the *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels stated that:

'The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got.'

Three years before this, the Chartist campaigner George Julian Harney declared:

'There is no foot of land, either in Britain or in the colonies, that you, the working class, can call your own.

'All men are brethren'

In September 1845 the society of Fraternal Democrats was formed, adopting the motto, 'All men are brethren.' It was founded by some in the British Chartist movement such as Harney along with a variety of political refugees from across Europe.

Part of the Fraternal Democrats' political platform declared:

'We denounce all political and hereditary inequalities and distinctions of castes... that the earth with all its natural productions is

the common property of all; we therefore denounce all infractions of this evidently just and natural law, as robbery and usurpation. We declare that the present state of society, which permits idlers and schemers to monopolise the fruits of the earth and the productions of industry, and compels the working classes to labour for inadequate rewards, and even condemns them to social slavery, destitution, and degradation, is essentially unjust.'

It also made a commitment to internationalism:

'Convinced that national prejudices have been, in all ages, taken advantage of by the people's oppressors to set them tearing the throats of each other, when they should have been working together for their common good, this society repudiates the term 'Foreigner,' no matter by, or to whom applied. Our moral creed is to receive our fellow men, without regard to 'country,' as members of one family, the human race; and citizens of one commonwealth – the world.'

In one of his addresses to the Fraternal Democrats, Harney explained:

'Whatever national differences divide Poles, Russians, Prussians, Hungarians, and Italians, these national differences have not prevented the Russian, Austrian, and Prussian despots uniting together to

maintain their tyranny; why, then, cannot countries unite for obtainment of their liberty? The cause of the people in all countries is the same- the cause of Labour, enslaved, and plundered... In each country the tyranny of the few and the slavery of the many are variously developed, but the principle in all is the same. In all countries the men who grow the wheat live on potatoes. The men who rear the cattle do not taste flesh-food. The men who cultivate the vine have only the dregs of its noble juice. The men who make clothing are in rags. The men who build the houses live in hovels. The men who create every necessary comfort and luxury are steeped in misery. Working men of all nations, are not your grievances, your wrongs, the same? Is not your good cause, then the same also? We may differ as to the means, or different circumstances may render different means necessary but the great end – the veritable emancipation of the human race- must be the one end and aim of all.'

He elaborated on his internationalist ideas in the journal, *The Northern Star* (June 19, 1847):

'The people are beginning to understand that foreign as well as domestic questions do affect them; that a blow struck at Liberty on the Tagus is an injury to the friends of Freedom on the Thames; that

the success of Republicanism in France would be the doom of Tyranny in every other land; and the triumph of England's democratic Charter would be the salvation of the millions throughout Europe.'

'But let the working men of Europe advance together and strike for their rights at one and the same time, and it will be seen – that every tyrannical government and usurping class will have enough to do at home without attempting to assist other oppressors.'

In 1848 when a British military intervention against France looked possible, the Fraternal Democrats issued a manifesto which said:

'Working men of Great Britain and Ireland, ask yourselves the question: why should you arm and fight for the preservation of institutions in the privileges of which you have no share... why should you arm and fight for the protection of property which you can only regard as the accumulated plunder of the fruits of your labour? Let the privileged and the property owners fight their own battles.'

Harney also published a newspaper, *The Red Republican*, to educate his working-class readers about socialism. The journal of July 1850 explained:

'As regards the working men swamping all other classes the answer is simple – other classes have no right to exist. To prepare the way for the absolute supremacy of the working class preparatory to the abolition of the system of classes, is the mission of The

Red Republican.'

In 1850 *The Red Republican* carried the first English translation of The Communist Manifesto, describing it as 'The most revolutionary document ever given to the world'.

'The poor have no country'

Another Chartist activist, Ernest Jones, wrote in *The People's Paper* of 17 February, 1855:

'Is there a poor and oppressed man in England? Is there a robbed and ruined artisan in France? Well, then, they appertain to one race, one country, one creed, one past, one present, and one future. The same with every nation, every colour, every section of the toiling world. Let them unite. The oppressors of humanity are united, even when they make war. They are united on one point, that of keeping the peoples in misery and subjection... Each democracy, singly, may not be strong enough to break its own yoke; but together they give a moral weight, an added strength, that nothing can resist. The alliance of peoples is the more vital now, because their disunion, the rekindling of national antipathies, can alone save tottering royalty from its doom. Kings and oligarchs are playing their last card: we can prevent their game. No movement of modern times has therefore been of such importance, as that international alliance about to be proclaimed...'

In yet another article in *The People's Paper* (3 March, 1855), Ernest Jones declared:

'Let none misunderstand the tenor of our meeting: we begin tonight no mere crusade against an aristocracy. We are not here to pull one tyranny down, only that another may live the stronger. We are against the tyranny of capital as well. The human race is divided between slaves and masters... Until labour commands capital, instead of capital commanding labour, I care not what political laws you make, what Republic or Monarchy you own- man is a slave.'

It reflected the view as later expressed by the First International:

'...The poor have no country, in all lands, they suffer from the same evils, and they, therefore, realise that the barriers put up by the powers that be the more thoroughly to enslave the people must fall. It is the poor, above all the poor, who will realise the dream of the gentle Anacharsis de Cloots, the orator of the human race, who will bring into being the great federation of the peoples. So come, young people, and help us accomplish this lofty task of the nineteenth century...' (To the Paris Students, To the Students and Young People of All Countries From the Workers of All Countries, 1866.)

The Fraternal Democrats, the Chartists and the International Workingmen's Association disappeared but not their principles. The idea of working peoples' international solidarity persisted.

Today, it is put forward by the World Socialist Movement.

ALJO



The Labour Party, the flag and the big stick



‘KEITH STARMER’S fondness for Union Jacks does not make him a nationalist, Labour frontbencher says’ (*Independent*, 16 February). So what, then, does it make him? According to the frontbencher concerned, Labour’s Shadow Welsh Secretary, an unknown called Jo Stevens, it made him a ‘patriot’. But what is the difference between a nationalist and a patriot? None, really. They are two different ways of referring to those who identify themselves with one particular state or would-be state.

In 1775, before the word ‘nationalist’ had been coined, Dr Johnson famously referred to patriotism as ‘the last refuge of a scoundrel.’ We don’t suppose Stevens meant that Starmer was a scoundrel. That would mean she was one too, since, as a member of Labour’s leadership team, she will endorse the current Labour Party fondness for draping themselves in the Union Jack to show it is as patriotic as any true-blue Tory.

At one time the Labour Party projected itself as the party of peace, of settling disputes between countries through the UN rather than military action. But that was a long time ago now, except that when he was Leader of the Labour Party Corbyn tried to revive it. Starmer now wants to distance himself as much as possible from this. He has been advised that it is a vote-loser and so contradicts the primary aim of the Labour Party which is to win elections so that the professional politicians who lead it can pursue their careers by becoming ministers of the Crown.

‘The party of NATO’

The lengths to which the Labour Party

is prepared to go seem to have no limit. In an interview with the *Times* (9 February) Starmer declared: ‘we have always been the party of NATO’, a military alliance that has been involved in recent decades in a number of wars (Yugoslavia 1999, Libya 2011, Afghanistan 2001-2014). Actually, what he said is true. Labour can claim to be ‘the party of NATO’. It was the post-war Labour government that took Britain into NATO in 1949 and it was a Labour government that sent armed forces to bomb Yugoslavia – the last time, as the media has forgotten, that hospitals and fleeing refugees were bombed in Europe.

To show that Labour is ‘the party of NATO’ and supports its possible expansion into Ukraine, Starmer visited NATO’s headquarters in Brussels on 9 February. A month later he was in Estonia to visit British troops stationed there on the frontier with Russia. Clearly, he wanted to demonstrate that, as a prospective Prime Minister, he too can be bellicose when required.

Further, when the Labour Party’s youth section tweeted a criticism of his support for NATO expansion into Ukraine he blocked their Twitter account (*Independent*, 23 February). Similarly, when 11 Labour MPs signed a statement that criticised ‘NATO expansionism’ he threatened to withdraw the whip from them if they didn’t withdraw their signatures (they did) (*Guardian*, 24 February).

When in government, they were never really the ‘party of peace’. All the Labour governments there have been have supported maintaining and improving the military might of the British capitalist state. The decision to develop the British A-bomb was taken by the post-war Labour government. The Labour Party’s leaders, even when in opposition, opposed giving up the British Bomb as CND wanted.

In any event the United Nations, which the Labour Party once promoted as the way to avoid wars, is a talking shop that’s quite incapable of preventing wars occurring. Its Charter even condones war under certain circumstances. Article 51 stipulates that ‘Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations’. The only effect of this has been that states wanting to go to war need to find a pretext to declare it

defensive and therefore not ‘illegal’ under the UN Charter. This may well be why Russia is insisting that its action in Ukraine is not a war but only a ‘military operation’.

Capitalism breeds war

War, the threat of war, and preparations for war are built into the global capitalist system involving as it does economic competition both between capitalist enterprises and between capitalist states. Economic conflicts arise over sources of raw materials, trade routes, markets and investment outlets, and strategic points and areas to protect these.

Capitalist states resort to war only as a last resort when they consider their ‘vital interests’ to be at stake. Waging a war is expensive and interrupts profit-making. Normally states try to solve their differences by negotiations. In such negotiations might is right, so each state seeks to arm itself with the most destructive weapons it can afford. The pre-WW1 US President Theodore Roosevelt described the ideal foreign policy for a state as ‘speak softly and carry a big stick’. Aneurin Bevan, when Labour’s shadow Foreign Secretary, made the same point at the 1957 Labour Party Conference when he opposed Britain unilaterally giving up the Bomb on the grounds that he didn’t want ‘to go naked into the conference chamber’.

If, however, diplomacy fails, and a state considers its vital interest at stake, then only at that point will it go to war. Russia has decided to do so in a bid to expand its borders and also prevent missiles from a hostile military alliance being stationed on its frontier, just as America was prepared to do in 1962 for the same sort of reason. Under capitalism, and as long as it lasts, there will always be the threat of a war and, even in the absence of a war, a colossal waste of resources on maintaining a ‘big stick’ to wave about in negotiations over the inevitable conflicts of economic interest that are built into the global capitalist system.

Capitalism breeds war. The Labour Party supports capitalism, so it is logical that it supports wars and the policy of the big stick. Socialists, on the other hand, have always opposed capitalism and the wars it generates. And, of course, the Labour Party.

ADAM BUICK

Kharkov under bombardment



KHARKOV IS Ukraine's second city, with a population of 1.4 million. Being in the country's northeast, just 25 miles from the Russian border, its northern and eastern districts soon came under heavy shelling. The website of the Kharkov anarchist group 'Assembly' (assembly.org.ua) describes life in the city at the end of February and beginning of March.

By March 3 the daily output of goods and services in Kharkov had fallen by about half. Many factories had come to a standstill. Many stores had closed their doors. Some firms were still paying wages to their workers, but many were not. Tens of thousands had taken shelter underground in the thirty metro stations, with the 'Heroes of Labour' station alone accommodating over 2,000.

How did people behave in these dire circumstances?

There were many who exploited the situation for their own profit. The 'Assembly' website provides a blacklist of employers who used the threat of unemployment to cut wages, lengthen hours and impose harsher working conditions. Taxi drivers demanded extra payment over and above the fixed tariffs. Thieves had a field day.

However, there were also many who volunteered to help others. Some voluntary efforts were initiated by the city administration. On February 28, for example, the mayor visited a bakery, where he called for volunteer drivers. But there was also a wide range of grassroots initiatives.

Oleg and Yulia Koval lived in Northern Saltivka, a residential district whose location on the northeastern edge of the city exposed it to especially heavy bombardment. They could have just got out and saved themselves. That would have been the 'sensible' thing to do. But instead they stayed

on in order to help fellow residents evacuate, ferrying them to the railway station and supplying them with food and medicine. One day Oleg returned from a shopping trip to see that their home was now a pile of rubble. In the rubble he found his wife's body. He resolved to continue the work in honour of her memory.

A man from the countryside with two boxes full of apples, handing them out to passersby. Packages of chicken, ground meat and liver being distributed from the back of a truck in the vicinity of Kharkov airport.

The 'Assembly' website displays several photos of volunteers transporting, preparing or cooking food for free distribution or giving food away on the street or inside metro stations (where volunteers also set up public toilets). A man from the countryside with two boxes full of apples, handing them out to passersby. Packages of chicken, ground meat and liver being distributed from the back of a truck in the vicinity of Kharkov

airport. Kitchen workers at the 'Mafia' Restaurant cooking meals for children's hospitals and the military.

And advertising posters that inform the public what goods a firm has to give out, inviting would-be recipients to call so-and-so. Thus, 'Mr. Bourbon Coffee' café can provide 100—150 litres of distilled water a day. And there are also volunteers who bring food and medicine to people unable to leave home.

Unfortunately, the website does not explain how all this production and distribution for use – the commentators call it 'disaster communism' – came about. Did the owners of the firms involved give their consent? Or had the workers taken control after the owners fled the country?

A few of the photos on the website reveal a less inspiring aspect of life in besieged Kharkov. One shows a man tied to a lamppost and with the word *marodyor* scrawled across his face. Others show men lying half-naked on the ground, tied up in rather uncomfortable postures and with the same word painted on their backs.

We are not told exactly what these men had done to deserve such humiliation and discomfort or who had imposed their punishment on them. *Marodyor* can mean looter, marauder or – more colloquially – profiteer. It is unlikely that it means 'looter' because public opinion in Kharkov does not condemn theft or looting as such. Indeed, we are told that an elderly woman who shoplifted food right in front of a surveillance camera became 'heroine of the day'. It was alright to steal food if you were hungry. And it was alright to loot from abandoned stores or street kiosks in order to distribute the stuff freely to others. Otherwise, after all, it would only have gone to waste. Presumably looting became unacceptable when conducted with a view to *selling* the loot and making a profit out of it.

The experience
of Kharkov under
bombardment confirms
the conclusions drawn
by writers who have
investigated the social
impact of other disasters

The experience of Kharkov under bombardment confirms the conclusions drawn by writers who have investigated the social impact of other disasters – for instance, Rebecca Solnit in her book *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disaster* (Penguin Books, 2010). Disaster sometimes brings out the worst in people, but very often it brings out the best – a greatly enhanced willingness to cooperate and help others. ‘Human nature’ is not an insuperable obstacle to socialism. On the contrary, socialism is the natural way of life of our species.

STEFAN



Cooking the Books

A price worth paying?

‘THE WAR in Ukraine will inflict an “economic cost” on the UK and worsen the cost of living crisis, Foreign Secretary Liz Truss has warned. But she suggested it was a price worth paying’ (*i* paper, 27 February). ‘The long-term defence of freedom’, she has also said, ‘is worth short-term economic pain’ (*Times*, 7 March).

‘Freedom’ is a nebulous concept that can mean anything and everything. On the surface, Truss appears to mean that Ukraine should be free to be a capitalist political democracy like in Britain and the EU countries. However, digging deeper, it turns out that she also means that Ukraine should be free to enter the Western capitalist bloc’s sphere of interest and not capitalist Russia’s.

In any event, whatever it is, there will be a price to pay for the economic sanctions that the government has imposed on Russia. When a state is in a war that threatens its existence, its capitalists have to make sacrifices so that their state survives. Normal profit-making and capital accumulation are subordinated ‘for the duration’ to the need to ward off or defeat

the enemy state. It’s a price they consider worth paying.

Although Britain is not actually fighting a war, the government still considers that geopolitical interests are at stake that justify the imposition of the wartime-like economic measures that the sanctions against Russia amount to. Many capitalist firms will suffer ‘pain’ as a result in terms of a loss of profits and, more generally, a slower rate of capital accumulation.

Those capitalist corporations which trade or invest in Russia will lose profits from sales and investments there. BP, for instance, is said to suffer a loss of \$25 billion on its investments there while Shell’s loss is said to be \$3 billion; McDonalds’ probably rather less. Others will have to find alternative, more expensive sources of raw materials. All will suffer from higher energy – gas and oil – prices, which will increase their costs and cut into profits. With fewer profits available, capital accumulation is likely to slow down, even falter.

Capitalist corporations seem to be accepting, at least for the time being, the

need to sacrifice some of their profits to stop Ukraine falling into Russian capitalism’s sphere of influence. But what about the workers?

There is widespread sympathy for the suffering of ordinary people like themselves in Ukraine – an expression of human empathy and solidarity – but agreeing to a further cut in living standards to arguably further the geopolitical aims of NATO is a different matter.

Truss admits that the sanctions imposed in Russia will ‘worsen the cost of living crisis’ here in Britain. Robert Lea (*Times*, 9 March) spells out what this involves:

‘Six million UK homes, one-fifth of its households, will teeter into heat-or-eat fuel poverty – and if domestic energy bills head towards £3,000 a year, it will be a case of neither heating nor eating.’

Not that the government is interested in the opinion of those it will cause to suffer. It has decided and that is that. Workers must pay the price, whether they like it or not. They always do under capitalism.

The Media as Intermediary

WHILE THE current tensions between ‘East’ and ‘West’ are in many ways a return to those of the Cold War years, one difference between then and now is that our awareness of events comes through countless more media outlets than in the last century. Alongside TV news on multiple channels and print journalism we have all the footage, testimony and opinions spread online, especially through social media. In theory, this gives us a wide pool of information in which we can swim around to find the truth as it rises to the surface. In practice, we have to wade through a swamp of biased and incomplete narratives too murky to reveal a clear picture.

The main TV news channels in the UK – BBC News, Sky News and Al Jazeera – have been largely similar to each other in how they have reported on the invasion of Ukraine, each focusing on the effects of the bombing, including the vast numbers of people displaced, alongside the pronouncements of governments and analysts. The BBC has probably devoted more time than the other channels to how the war is affecting people, including those interviewed while struggling to live under attack from Russian forces. Coverage of the relief effort for refugees has been prominent, maybe to try and counterbalance the distressing accounts of the devastation with something more positive about people’s willingness to help those in need. GB News has taken a characteristically conservative perspective, with little emphasis on the refugees’ plight, and pundits such as Dan Wootton applauding Boris Johnson’s handling of the crisis.

Having a near-consensus in the mainstream media doesn’t mean that it is comprehensive. TV news channels have examined economic aspects of the war only to the extent of the impact of sanctions on Russia or whether a side effect will be further increases to energy prices in the UK and Europe. Economic factors behind the situation aren’t generally discussed, such as the dilemma Ukraine was in over whether to develop trade links with the EU or Russia, alongside those with China. In recent years, the UK’s mainstream TV news programmes haven’t reported much on events in Eastern Europe, making the invasion of Ukraine appear more unexpected than it should have been. The Russian state’s annexation of Crimea in 2014 received media attention in the UK at the time, unlike the contemporaneous takeover of the government and police in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions by pro-Russian separatist



forces. And neither issue has been covered much in the intervening years, when attention instead went to Brexit and then the pandemic. Nor has NATO’s expansion eastwards been critiqued, and there haven’t been comparisons drawn between the Russian army’s attacks on hospitals and homes and NATO’s bombing of civilians in Yugoslavia during the Kosovo War in 1999. The impression given is that Putin’s decision to invade Ukraine was a sudden event, prompted only by him finally deciding to show his true colours. The lack of recognition of NATO’s actions as contributory factors helps to simplify the mainstream media’s narrative.

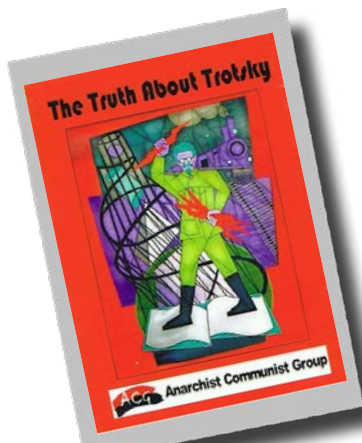
UK news channels have been consistent in presenting the war in a conveniently black and white way. It is difficult to imagine them being at all critical of Volodymyr Zelensky’s actions or giving prominence to any allegations of wrongdoing by the Ukrainian army, which includes the far-right Azov regiment. In fact, not much at all has been reported about how they are fighting the war. Russia Today, on the other hand, was keen to depict Ukraine as the sole aggressor, following the narrative of its owner, the Russian state. Before its broadcast in the UK ended, RT’s emphasis was firmly on reports of Ukrainian forces bombing ‘the two Donbass republics’ as it called them, echoing the Russian state’s view that Donetsk and Luhansk have separated from Ukraine, where they are officially defined as ‘temporarily occupied territories’. These reports included allegations that the Ukrainian army has been using phosphorus in weapons, banned by the UN. RT’s policy was to promote the Russian state’s description of a ‘special military operation’ to ‘demilitarise and denazify’ Ukraine, with words such as ‘war’ and ‘invasion’ forbidden. Ironically, one of RT’s slogans has been ‘truth over narrative’.

Regulator Ofcom investigated whether the channel was breaching its rules about ‘due impartiality’, according to which some political bias is allowed provided that alternative views are mentioned. Consequently, RT’s licence to broadcast in the UK was revoked on 18 March, although the EU had already pulled the plug on the channel on 2 March, cutting its stream to the UK. Restricting RT limits access to different opinions (albeit ones heavily biased in favour of Putin’s brutal regime) from which people can make their own judgements. The Kremlin’s crackdown on independent journalism and dissenting voices within Russia is doing the same in a more extreme way.

The mainstream media in capitalism is never going to give us the full story, especially during a war. It doesn’t have the full story to give: any state is bound to curb what information about its strategies the media has access to. Each media outlet selects what to use from the material it obtains and explains events according to its own ethos, creating a narrative which news bulletins disguise under the pretence of objectivity. The language which the media uses also shapes our interpretation. While it is easy to see through the term ‘special military operation’, other expressions are more subtle in how they frame events. For instance, journalists use phrases like ‘Russia invading’ or ‘Ukraine negotiating’, as do many people. It’s recognised that this is just shorthand for the army or government rather than meaning Russia or Ukraine as a whole, but the wording lazily conflates the state with the people under it. This distracts from the reality that the war is between states, not the peoples of Russia and Ukraine who are both pawns and victims. Despite any slant given by the media, footage of families grieving or missiles hitting tower blocks speaks for itself.

MIKE FOSTER

Ruthless



The Truth About Trotsky. Anarchist Communist Group. ACG/Stormy Petrel, 2021. 81pp.

In 1937 Leon Trotsky, from his exile in Central America, wrote an account of the murderous rule of Stalin in Bolshevik Russia. He entitled it *The Crimes of Stalin*. This new ACG pamphlet also deals with the brutal acts of Bolshevism but those carried out not by Stalin but, ironical as it may seem, by Trotsky. Trotsky's activities pre-date the coming to monolithic power of Stalin in 1924 but are shown to be hardly less savage and ruthless.

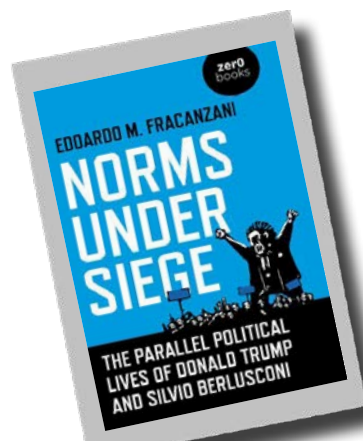
In a series of short chapters the pamphlet analyses in significant detail the actions of Trotsky in ordering and directing the elimination, sometimes on a mass scale, of those he considered in any sense obstacles to the consolidation of Bolshevik power in the period of 'war communism' after 1917. Chapter titles such as 'Trotsky as an Advocate of Concentration Camps', 'Shootings for Deserters', 'Shooting for Drunkenness' and 'Trotsky and Poison Gas' tell their own tale of cruelty and brutality and in their narrative illustrate the utter and perhaps pathological ruthlessness of Trotsky as commander-in-chief of the Red Army. A prime example is the much-documented mass slaughter of the sailors of Kronstadt in 1921. The sailors, who had been staunch supporters of the revolution in 1917 but were now disgruntled over their worsening living conditions and seen to be challenging the new Russian (state capitalist) state. As the pamphlet puts it: 'The revolt was drowned in blood, with thousands shot and many sent to the Solovki camps.' The event is re-examined here and Trotsky's later excuse that the sailors were 'counter-revolutionaries' and not the same ones as in 1917 is dismissed as false. And in earlier episodes we read how 'the Bolsheviks reacted to the strike at the Putilov plant in Petrograd by shooting 200 workers. Then 'in Astrakhan, the Bolsheviks fired on an assembly of 10,000 metalworkers, injuring 2,000 of them' and 'this was followed by 400 executions by the Cheka, with Trotsky,

as War Commissar, sending his approval'.

Yet Trotsky still has many followers on the political left. One book recently talked about his 'extraordinary vision' and he is often counterposed to Stalin, who is seen as 'bad' for the misdeeds he perpetrated in the name of communism or socialism, while Trotsky, banished by Stalin and then murdered on his orders is seen as 'good'. Soviet Russia, we are sometimes told, would have had a different trajectory if Trotsky and not Stalin had succeeded Lenin as its leader. Yet nothing we know and which is recapitulated here about Trotsky's 'crimes' suggests that he would have been any less capable than Stalin of tyrannous dictatorial rule over a country far too backward at the time for the development of anything other than centralised state capitalism. So his influence today among many who would consider their ideas about social and political change as being progressive is nothing if not misplaced, both in view of his activities when alive, the theories (such as 'permanent revolution') that he left behind and the view he shared with Lenin of the need for a Party to 'lead' workers to revolution. In the event he ended up a victim of the system he had been one of the prime architects of, 'consumed', as this pamphlet has it 'by a murderous reaction that he had helped to create'.

HOWARD MOSS

Double Trouble



Norms Under Siege: The Parallel Political Lives of Donald Trump and Silvio Berlusconi. By Edoardo M Fracanzani, Zero Books, 2021. 244 pages, £14.99

Edoardo M Fracanzani has used his background in studying Italian politics and society to make a comparison between Italy's and America's most prominent leaders of recent years. The similarities he finds between the careers and approaches of Silvio Berlusconi and Donald Trump are cogently described in *Norms Under Siege*, and go much further than them both being slimy right-wing populists.

As Fracanzani explains, the parallels between Berlusconi and Trump began

before they entered the political arena.

Both started out in the real estate business and later moved into the entertainment industry, with Berlusconi's empire of television channels and Trump as co-producer and host of *The Apprentice*. Their business careers were built on 'a heavy reliance on cronyism, a proclivity to bending (and occasionally breaking) the rules, the adoption of a rather low ethical bar in the pursuit of their objectives' (p.33), tendencies they continued to employ in their subsequent political careers. These were new vehicles for increasing the power they gained in business, with neither entering politics aiming to improve wider society. Before they became heads of government, each played around with political affiliations which would serve them best at the time. Trump had been a member of several parties, including the Democrats, before settling with the Republicans, while Berlusconi had allies in National Alliance, a party with roots in fascism, as well as Italy's so-called Socialist Party (Partito Socialista Italiano).

Berlusconi, as head of the Forza Italia ('Go Italy') party, was first elected as Prime Minister in 1994, following a period of reform of the electoral system and public dislike of the centrist establishment. His influence over the output of Italy's TV stations meant that he could win over the support of a large chunk of the populace, in particular those who were anti-left. He was re-elected in 2001 and 2008, and was prevented from running again in 2018 by his conviction for tax evasion. Trump was inaugurated as President of the United States in early 2017, after decades of the Republican Party shifting further to the right on social policies and promoting a stance of tax cuts, which didn't really translate to reductions in state expenditure. *Norms Under Siege* was completed before Joe Biden moved into the White House, denying us Fracanzani's views on Trump's handling of the pandemic and his presidency's turbulent end in January 2021.

As Fracanzani convincingly argues, with patiently explained examples, the two leaders used similar approaches to attract public support. Generally, this was among people with lower levels of mainstream education and a higher than average income. He writes that 'possibly the most important element of Trump's, as well as Berlusconi's, extraordinary success with a certain class of voters is a rooted resentment toward the elites' (p.135). They channelled this resentment into support by somehow giving the impression to many people that they are against the elite, despite them firmly being part of it because of their wealth

and power. They are distanced from others in their privileged position, though their personalities (particularly their lack of taste, according to Fracanzani) made them unpopular with their peers, and their loose way of behaving differentiated them from other politicians. Berlusconi has the ‘manners of a TV loud-speaking salesman’ (p.25), which many voters could still relate to more than their usual staid politicians. The resentment towards the elite which Trump and Berlusconi used wasn’t only directed towards leaders but also to a perceived ‘cultural elite’ driving social trends leftwards. As Fracanzani says, ‘no one exploited political correctness fatigue for political gain more than [Trump]’ (p.107). His and Berlusconi’s disregard of ‘political correctness’, or even just basic decency, is exemplified in their sexist attitudes to women, which escalated to sex scandals which failed to derail them. Their behaviour is marked by a lack of shame, which indicates that they aren’t concerned about acting ethically. Despite, or even because of, their transgressions, they maintained a

base of supporters whose loyalty is perhaps ‘the most striking aspect of the Trump and Berlusconi phenomena’ (p.124).

Of course, the two leaders had their critics as well. Their stock response to complaints against their behaviour has been to childishly play the victim and portray their accusers as enemies to get revenge on, a trick which apparently works. ‘The most striking similarity between Berlusconi and Trump is the way they were able to shape the public debate in such a way as to escape accountability from their unprecedented, unethical, and illegal behaviour’ (p.175). When challenged through the legal system, they used their position to avoid censure in ways which, according to Fracanzani, have caused ‘institutional damage’: ‘Possibly, the most apparent dents inflicted regard the law enforcement institutions these leaders choose to denigrate in order to bully their way out of criminal investigations’ (p.219).

Norms Under Siege’s account of the parallel careers of Berlusconi and Trump is a catalogue of the rules they have broken.

Among these rules, there is a distinction between laws (which are, of course, set in legislation) and norms (social expectations, including ethical values), which is where we find the book’s title (although surprisingly, the word ‘siege’ never appears in its text). For Fracanzani, a combination of laws and norms ‘governs all systems’ (p.142), and because norms are less enforceable, a system which relies too much on them is vulnerable to being misused by any politicians there for their own benefit. So, his stance is based on believing in capitalist tenets like laws and that government is a machine which can be run responsibly, if it has sufficient safeguards against self-serving politicians. But his own opinions aren’t prominent in the book: his clear dislike for Berlusconi and Trump is tempered by his methodical tone, and he prefers to let his detailed analysis of the context in which they rose to their positions speak for itself. His book is a warning about how our political culture and system enable contemptible people like them to get power.

MIKE FOSTER

Obituary Jim Fleming

It is with sadness that Glasgow branch has to announce the death of James Fleming on January 30th at the age of 85. James – Jim to his friends – was born in Glasgow’s Rottenrow hospital on the second of September 1936. He lived with his parents in a one room rat-infested flat with an outside toilet shared with 17 other neighbours in the Maryhill district. He attended the local school where he excelled at art his favourite subject. He was also proficient enough to be selected for the school football team where, coincidentally, the goalkeeper was Dick Donnelly, a future comrade in the SPGB. Also in the team was Bertie Auld, who would achieve legendary football status as a member of the Celtic team which in 1967 was the first British club to win the European Cup. Rubbing shoulders with famous personalities would be a constant throughout Jim’s life.

Jim was introduced to politics at a young age by his parents who would take him along to the Glasgow Open Workers’ Forum where people of different political persuasions would participate in heated debates. One of Jim’s fondest memories was of his father straining to read *Capital* by the light of a candle. His father was an accomplished accordion player who would entertain their neighbours who would cram into their tiny home during air-raids.

As a railway employee, his father was tasked with overseeing a group of Italian prisoners of war put to work on the rail tracks, during which he would sneak them away to their home where Jim’s mother would share their meagre rations.

Jim’s first job at the age of 15 was in a hat shop in Glasgow’s Buchanan St where on one occasion he was instructed to accompany a customer to another hat shop to purchase a hat that was out of stock in Jim’s place of work. The customer was Maurice Chevalier. After the war Jim obtained work at Renfrew Airport as a warehouse boy where he worked really hard eventually attaining the position of Cargo Manager for Glasgow and Manchester airports. As a manager Jim was required in the event of an industrial dispute, to represent the employers as was

the case when he found himself seated across the table from the shop steward who incredibly, was also an SPGB member, and who prior to the meeting had been coached by Jim about avoiding saying anything that could be interpreted as weakness. The union won the day.

Jim had innumerable flights during his 40 year career but undoubtedly the most memorable resulted from a last minute memo requiring representation at a meeting scheduled for later that day in New York which would be an impossibility by a conventional flight. His boss had other ideas and Jim found himself aboard Concorde arriving at the venue just as the meeting was about to commence.

After coming into contact with the SPGB he became a member in October 1961. A very capable speaker, Jim had an uncanny knack of exerting a calming influence on any belligerent member of the audience who took exception to being referred to as a wage slave. However, on one occasion when speaking in Paisley, his ability was ineffective with one man who threatened him with violence before departing and then reappearing, brandishing a discarded empty milk bottle which he smashed against a wall before rushing the platform, then realising that all he was holding was the neck of the bottle. He then bolted. Jim returned to Glasgow to meet up with the other members in the Horseshoe bar after they had concluded their meeting in Royal Exchange Square. He related the bottle tale which was met with much hilarity, including from the one non-member who had attended previous meetings and had been invited to join the members in the pub – Billy Connolly, who in a later album told a tale about being threatened by a drunk guy with a beer bottle which he smashed...

Jim was still active, attending branch meetings until Covid struck. Away from the Party, his main activities were golf, ballroom dancing, and walking, which he continued as long as he was physically able. We extend our heartfelt condolences to his children, Peter, Kirstyn and Karl.

A.Mc.N.

Raising of the School Leaving Age



FROM NEXT year pupils whose fifteenth birthday falls on or after 1 September, 1972, will have to remain at school for one year more than they would otherwise have done, although it must at once be made clear that many children already stay on at school quite voluntarily. In fact there is an average of some 60 percent of the age group throughout the country already doing so. This figure must, however, be considered further to establish precisely where the problems are likely to arise. It does not follow that 60 percent in every area stay on

at school; the incidence varies from about 68 percent in Greater London and the South to some 42 percent in the East Midlands.

The concern among practising teachers and administrators is directed towards the group of pupils who would normally leave at fifteen, and although these represent a minority of the age group there is a feeling that these "reluctant learners", as they have come to be called, will cause disruption disproportionately to their numbers. (...)

Education in the seventies will continue to develop along the lines that it has

for the past century, and to the same purpose, that is producing workers capable of manning the machinery of production and distribution, who are paid in return sufficient wages and salaries to reproduce their energies. The fact that some workers progress beyond this stage is due to their own efforts rather than the educational system, just as it was during the last century in Britain and just as it is today in many of the underdeveloped countries throughout the world. The Times "Turnover" article (29 April, 1964) pointed out that "Strictly speaking the hottest political debates about education are not about education at all. They are about national investment, national competitiveness, social justice and above all class." The discussion, in other words, is about educational reforms within the context of capitalism. Real freedom and a truly liberal education can only come about in a cooperative and non-competitive society. Socialists look forward to the day when education will be genuinely for the individual, and when the development of creative talents will replace the pre-packaged, mass-training that sadly passes for education today.

(Socialist Standard, April 1972)

Socialist Party official logo Cotton Bags—on sale now

Price just £3.50 (£5 including UK P&P)



These stylish cotton bags come in black with the Socialist Party logo screen printed in white on one side and with a shortened web address.

They measure 38 x 42 cm and have two shoulder length cotton handles.

On sale now from The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.

Price just £3.50—add £1.50 for UK P&P. Sent in cardboard packaging. Please supply name and address. For bulk or overseas orders please email spgb@worldsocialism.org or phone 0207 622 3811.

Wash bags if used frequently, but only in cold water and do not iron over design or tumble dry.

World Socialist Movement Online Meetings

To join Discord contact the
Administrator on
spbg.discord@worldsocialism.org.

APRIL 2022 EVENTS

Sundays at 19.30 (IST)

Weekly WSP (India) meeting

Sunday 3 April 11.00 GMT + 1 on Zoom

Central Branch meeting.

Anyone wishing to join in should contact:- spgb.cbs@worldsocialism.org to arrange an invite.

Friday 8 April 19.30 GMT +1

Did you see the news?

General current affairs discussion

Host: Dougie McClellan

Friday 15 April

No Meeting (Easter Holiday)

Friday 22 April

No Meeting

Saturday 23 April 10.00 to 17.30 GMT +1

**Sunday 24 April March 10.00 to 17. 30 GMT + 1
(if required)**

**Annual Socialist Party of Great Britain Conference
(hybrid)**

Sunday 1 May 11.00 GMT + 1

Virtual May Day Rally

Socialist Party Physical Meetings

LONDON

Annual Conference

Saturday 23 April 10am to 5.30pm

Sunday 24 April March 10am to 5.30 pm (if required)

Socialist Party Head Office, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN. Visitors Welcome. Can be followed on Discord (see above).

MANCHESTER

Saturday 9 April, 2pm

Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Central Manchester

The Real Way to End Austerity

Monday 2 May, from around 12.00

Burnley May Day Festival

Towneley Park, Todmorden Road, Burnley, BB1 3RQ

The Socialist Party will have a stall at this event

Cardiff: Every Saturday 1pm-3pm (weather permitting)

Street Stall, Capitol Shopping Centre, Queen Street

(Newport Road end).

Glasgow: Second Saturday of each month at The Atholl Arms Pub, 134 Renfrew St, G2 3AU Let's get together for a beer and a blether. 2pm onwards. 2 minutes walk from Buchanan Street Bus Station. For further information call Paul Edwards on 07484 717893.

Yorkshire: Discussion group meets monthly either on Zoom or physical meetings. Further information:

fredi.edwards@hotmail.co.uk

Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the

working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

Will We Always Have Food Banks?



THIS WEEK we are looking for:

- **Small coffee - jars**
- **Custard - tins**
- **Rice - tins**
- **Packed flavoured rice**
- **Milk - long life**
- **Dog food**
- **Tinned fruit**

said a post on my local community Facebook page calling for contributions to the week's food bank collection. It went on: 'Please try to help us, I will be at Pantygydyr Church on Tuesdays between 9 and 12.30. Food can still be dropped off on Mondays to Fridays at the Church between 9.30 and 12.30. Thank you for your continued support, you lovely people. Well done to you all.'

Enough to go round?

That this food bank 'thrives' is at one and the same time both a tribute to people's kindness towards their fellow human beings and a matter of unutterable sadness that it is necessary at all. Though exact figures are hard to ascertain, a House of Commons Library report from 14 July 2021 stated that 'both the number of food banks and the quantity of emergency food parcels they distribute have increased. In February 2021 there were over 1,300 Trussell Trust food banks in the UK, in addition to over 900 independent food banks'. It has been further estimated that, in 2021, up to 10 million people will have depended on food banks.

Of course, the UK is by no means alone among 'developed' countries where people either go short of food or are driven to the humiliation of queuing to be handed it from stores by volunteers. The

USA, for example, the wealthiest country in the world, has a chronic problem of hunger, with 35 million people suffering severe food insecurity, especially among the 3.5 million of its population who are without homes – even while the number of vacant homes is 18.6 million. And, according to United Nations data from 2019, 746 million people worldwide – nearly 10 percent of the earth's population – are likely not to know where the next meal is coming from.

Yet all this is happening in an era when, according to Tristram Stuart's book, *Waste*, 'farmers worldwide currently provide the daily equivalent of 2,800 calories of food per person – more than enough to go round' and he goes on, if food were produced and distributed rationally (by that we understand for need rather than for profit), there could be enough to feed those going hungry 23 times over. So there is patently enough to feed everyone on the planet. Yet large numbers continue to go hungry – or even die of malnutrition – and, even in countries where food is manifestly plentiful, many people are still forced to have recourse to food banks.

A food utopia?

So what do we do about a situation in which existing resources are not in themselves a limiting factor to feeding the whole world at a decent level? Various ideas have been put forward. The 2020 book by Carolyn Steel, *Sitopia. How Food Can Save the World*, for example, argued that world hunger could be solved by making the existing structures of money and the market work more benignly and cooperatively. And now the ethnobotanist James Wong, presenter of the BBC's 'Follow the Food' series, has made a BBC webcast entitled 'How We Can Reach for a Food Utopia' (tinyurl.com/25bc8hbn), in which he too

proposes ways of feeding the world adequately. He asks the question 'What if we could reimagine the global food system so that it worked perfectly?' He attempts to answer this by talking about food being made 'more affordable, either by making it less expensive, or by tiering it based on people's incomes', and he explains how food could be produced in far greater quantities using fewer resources and less land, water and carbon using such methods as hydroponics and vertical urban farming with robots. He also talks about how negative environmental impacts can be remedied by using technology such as drones, satellites and GPS and by making basic natural processes such as photosynthesis more efficient with new innovative techniques.

Money the barrier

But among all this, James Wong fails, as Carolyn Steel did before him, to consider that, no matter how technologically efficient food production may become, under the current economic system it can only feed the people with money in their pockets to pay for it. We could, it seems, produce at least ten times as much food as now, but, as long as the buying and selling of it stands in the way, the world's hungry or less well fed will not have access to that food. This is what the scientific and technical experts who write about food, no matter how well meaning they may be, seem incapable of taking into account. They either fail to understand or do not want to understand that use of the current system of money and markets to produce and distribute food, regardless of any tweaks to it that may be proposed or enacted, will never cease to lead to massive wealth for the few and hunger or the food bank for many. Adequate resources to provide a decent life for all are indeed available, but that decent life cannot be realised under the profit system. It can only be possible in the kind of moneyless, marketless society that we stand for.

Failing that, the food bank volunteers at Pantygydyr church, behaving in the cooperative and human-centred way we all applaud, will continue to be needed. And will only cease to be needed when we have a whole organisation of society that is cooperative and human-centred.

HOWARD MOSS